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[Dear Permission to be Powerful Reader](#)

Dear *Permission to be Powerful* Reader,

I've noticed something I've never heard anyone talk about:

When you break up with someone...

How they react to rejection reflects who they are fundamentally.





What do I mean?

When you start dating someone, they have the maximum incentive to lie to you. The whole agenda is to keep your flaws under wraps for as long as possible.

Hopefully, the other person will feel too invested in you by the time they figure out how much of a schmuck you are.

Conversely, when you break up with someone, they have the least incentive to play nice and sweetly with you.

How people react when you break up with them says a lot. Perhaps more than all of the late-night conversations ever could.

When a person has no incentive to be kind to you, but they show you kindness anyway.

That says a lot about a person.

My ex-wife once told me she would be civil if we ever broke up.

But when it came time for us to split up, she was the opposite of civil.

Cruel. Bloodthirsty.

She wasn't just bitter—she was out for blood. Not content with the breakup, she wanted to destroy me.

She constantly searched for new conflicts to incite and construe everything I did in some nefarious way. She tried to imply that I was stalking her.

She went to court, claiming she needed a restraining order, fabricating a whole spectacle—when, in reality, she was still hoping I'd come back to her. I never looked back. Not even close.

I moved two hours away to make sure the separation would stick.



That girl wishes I was thinking about her so badly. Meanwhile, it's babes everywhere.

She was DELIGHTED when the judge sided with her and said that our house, which I'd put all my money into, wasn't marital property.

When she left my car unregistered for months without telling me

I had to find out from the police who towed my car in the middle of the night, and I had to sleep at a roadside motel.

She ran a giant smear campaign filled with lies and distortions.

She enjoyed my downfall, like when she said she'd be happy if I got fired.

Telling me my ex before her "was right about me."

Calling me Brian Laundrie...

Calling me a pedophile.

She always twisted the facts to fit her narrative.

When you're with someone who loves you, they don't want you to know the side of them that is cruel, hurtful, and acrimonious. But that side of them, even if you have never seen it... If it's there, it's there.

I've had the sobering experience on multiple occasions now of seeing a whole new side of a person come out only after the breakup, only after I stopped kissing their ass.

It was sobering because I had no idea my exes possessed some of these traits while we were together.

I find that so fascinating.

It's jarring to the point that I have to stop and tell myself if I knew this is what they were really like underneath it all, we would have broken up a long time ago.

I had a similar experience with an ex who was all smiles and sweet like sugar while we were together, but the minute I broke up with her, she started treating me like a sworn enemy.

She was always hostile when I saw her in public. She said terrible things about me...

Even though she never complained while we were together.

I could see in my saying hello that she was prepared to interpret anything I said as I tried to get her back. Even though I'd blocked her on every channel, including email, I never looked back.

She expected that I would lock horns with her — when in reality, I went and became a Buddhist and sat in the zendo by myself for over a year— learning about compassion, forgiveness, and peace.

One day, she loved me. The next, I was the villain in her story.

The switch was instant—like a mask dropping.

I wasn't her ex. I was her enemy.

That is one of the most baffling things ever. Being treated like public enemy number one.

And, if I'm being sincere, I believe she stole something valuable from me. I don't know precisely how or when, but my file folder with every document about my marriage went missing.

It's not something I would lose, and she's the only person with access to it. She even once said to me ominously, "If you knew what I did, you wouldn't want to be friendly with me."

This was a profoundly violating experience. I was depressed for a week.

It tells me that what I thought was love could not have been. It couldn't have been real if that person's respect and goodwill for me could vanish in an instant like that. That type of treatment suggests that this person's so-called love for me was entirely transactional and conditional to my performing a role. On me being who she wanted me to be. If my value, in your eyes, can vanish instantly like that, how could it have been real love?

I broke up with you but shared much of my life with you. Things may not work out, and I may not even like how I was treated, but my desire to show that person goodwill and respect does not go away the minute they stop being my girlfriend.

How are people like this?

It's as my therapist always says: most people are children in adult bodies.

My therapist clued me into one of the secret laws of the universe. I can't tell you how radically my perceptions of people changed after that concept sunk in.

One day, I could spot precisely what he had been telling me for years.

For the first time, I could see my partner's inner child. It's one thing you can go through all your life without ever noticing... but it's there.

My therapist talks a lot about the inner child. The person you were when you were little is alive and well—a secret companion living inside of you that you may know nothing about.

As I said, I started to see the precise moment I triggered one ex back to her seven-year-old self. If you're not paying attention, you'll miss it. I promise this is something that all human beings do. It wasn't just her.

Here's what I saw:

Usually, when I argued with her, she would lash out. But during one such confrontation, I spotted something in her that I had never noticed in all the 8 years we had been together.

I saw the little girl who felt utterly helpless and devastated.

Seeing her inner child in real time completely changed my understanding of her. If I'm ever behaving irrationally...

If I ever have a strong reaction to someone and I overreact... It's usually my inner child kicking and screaming and protesting.

He's throwing a tantrum.

I've noticed something fascinating about my inner child. He keeps the score.

He feels contempt and mistrust for all the times I abandoned myself to please others. Seeing my ex's inner child made it much easier for me to empathize with her.

Of course, I tend to attract a specific type of person. That person is usually dysfunctional. However, I am happy to report that I've started attracting healthier women.

It's very insightful. Every time I unlock a new level of person that I attract — the old dysfunctional ways I used to behave become evident. I think about the last person I dated and the person I used to be.

The Chauffeur me would have sent her running for the hills.

And this was only a few years ago. They wouldn't even be on my radar, or I wouldn't be on theirs.

Every time I heal more of my wounded self, it suddenly becomes apparent how futile the old way of doing things was. This was true in my romantic relationships and my professional life.

One day, I woke up and realized how futile it was to build a business that depended on referrals to grow and how pointless it was to keep cold-calling people.

I have a passionate hatred for cold calling because there were many times when I was desperate, and cold calling seemed like my only option for getting some quick cash.

But with every email I sent... With every rejection, I got back...

I felt more and more like a cheap whore.

One day, I woke up healed enough to understand naturally that cold calling had to stop and stop for good. People sense desperation. If you're desperate, you'll always attract people who don't value you. And the moment you truly believe in your value, the dynamic changes.

It simply wasn't the right dynamic at all. This isn't the way the game of business is played. One day, I got it through my mind that I would never debase myself for money again.

Never again.

And that's when clients mysteriously started knocking on my door. It was uncanny.

Likewise, in relationships, sometimes, after I graduate to a new level of maturity and start attracting higher-quality people,...

I stop, look back, and realize, “Wait—you mean I went my whole life like this?”

I had never, not even once, tried this much healthier approach.

How on earth can that be?

One example of this was the old me, who was a pathological giver.

There was a certain desperation about me that was obvious to everyone else, but I had been this way for so long that I hardly noticed it. Like right now... I asked a girl out.

She steps back. She starts being very avoidant.

The old me would have pursued her endlessly like a fish to water. That was my instinct.

And I was blown away when I realized that I had never tried another approach in my life.

I had probably made this same mistake hundreds of times. How can we miss the most obvious truths about ourselves?

For the first time, I considered my inner child and how he would feel if he had been brave and vulnerable, and then suddenly, the other person started treating him like a stalker.

So, for the first time in my life... I dropped her, and I didn't look back.

If you want to be with me, I deserve some clarity about your intentions.

Like — it can't be that one minute you like me, and the next minute I'm a stalker, but the next minute you love me again.

How did I go my whole life missing all of this?

So, for the first time, my energy is retracted.

She sees me in class; I don't linger. I don't try to make eye contact with her across the room. If you want to be with me, prove it.

It's still unclear if I will follow through with this one, but I'm noticing a stark difference I'd never experienced before.

If breakups reveal a person's true nature, does that mean we never really know the people we're with?

My answer is yes.

You might think people get together more often, but they don't have an accurate picture of who they are.

People often fall in love with figments of their imagination, even though the flesh-and-blood person may be completely different.

If breakups show us who people really are...What if they show us who we really are, too?

This is another topic that fascinates me.

Who are you anyway?

What constitutes YOU? Your body? Your beliefs?

The body is constantly morphing and changing — from a baby to a corpse. It never stays static. Which version of your body is the real you?

Your beliefs are constantly changing. There was a time, a very long time ago, when I was a homophobic misogynist. In stark contrast to the person I

am today. Every single one of your beliefs can change.

And what about when you were a baby and a blank slate? Who were you then?

Who is the person who was assigned your name?

I can endlessly make circles around this point — I'll spare you today.

This is a topic that comes up a lot in Zen.

It's easy to say you are a Democrat or a Republican.

The truth I'm trying to point out here is that you are something that transcends belief.

But what?

Ah.

Stick around, and we'll keep unraveling the biggest lie you've ever been told.

Until next time,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature reads "Anton Volney". The first name "Anton" is written in a cursive script, and the last name "Volney" is written in a more bold, slightly stylized cursive. There are long, sweeping horizontal strokes above and below the names, and a diagonal line crossing through the middle of the signature.

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist



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